

PBS Lesson Series

ELA, Grade 8, Lesson 19

Teacher Packet

Character name	Description
Della	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• dedicated to saving money• a tough negotiator• frustrated with her current situation• happily married to Jim• has been trying for months to save enough money for a gift for Jim but doesn't have enough• really loves and admires Jim• has long beautiful hair• willing to sacrifice for Jim• persistent• dedicated to finding the right gift for Jim• values the fob chain for its simple beauty and therefore thinks it's the perfect gift for Jim• so loving and generous that she is willing to deal with the negative consequences of love and generosity
James (Jim)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once lived in prosperity, or got along fine financially• Now makes a lot less money than he once did and he is somewhat ashamed by it• He is happily married to Della and they have a home together

Objective: Read a short story called “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry in order to analyze the text and determine its meaning.

There are a number of interesting ways in which the author, O. Henry, reveals to his readers that Della loves her husband greatly and that she is willing to sacrifice time, money, and effort to make him happy. In the section that we read today, the author focused mainly on Della's character and revealed it through a number of key details. One way that he did it was through the use of figurative language. He said that Della turned all of the stores "inside out." This is a clear way of showing readers that Della was willing to go through all of the stores and search every item to find the perfect Christmas gift for Jim. The author also used detailed descriptions to explain how Della found the perfect gift. He talks about the gift being "simple and chaste in design" and that it showed its value "by substance alone." He said that it represented Jim in that it possessed "quietness and value." This all reveals Della's character because she valued these qualities in the fob chain much like she valued these qualities in Jim's character. Finally, the author uses good description and sensory language to show Della's genuine love for Jim. He describes Della as having to break out of her spell of excitement and use prudence and reason in preparing for Jim's arrival. This begins with her fixing her hair - despite the ravages that resulted from cutting her long hair, Della was determined to make Jim happy. At the end of the section, the author uses sensory language to show Della's anxious anticipation of his arrival. The author says that "she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight" and that she "turned white for a moment" while whispering a "little silent prayer." This language brings the scene to life for the reader and helps them to experience Della's anxiety. All the while, though, the reader understands that this is another example of Della's deep love for Jim. In each of these ways, the author develops a clear picture of Della's character and prepares the reader for the final scenes of the story.

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- The author uses good description and sensory language to show that as she arrives home, she contains her excitement and focuses on doing things that will make Jim happy - she fixes her freshly cut hair, she makes coffee, and prepares to cook dinner. This shows her genuine love for Jim as she wants to make him happy.

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- The author used sensory detail to show that although Della had thoroughly prepared for Jim's arrival, she was still very anxious to see his reaction to her hair.

Graphic Organizer

Character name	Description

Plot

Themes

Key details

Vocabulary word/word choice	Meaning

Literary device	Meaning

Plot

- Della has been working for months to save money and all that she has to show for it is one dollar and eighty-seven cents.
- It's Christmas Eve and she does not have enough money to buy the gift for Jim that she wants to buy for him.
- Della sells her hair for \$20 so she can buy Jim a nice Christmas gift.
- Della searches through all the stores to find the perfect Christmas gift for Jim. She finally finds it - a platinum fob chain, which will pair perfectly with his watch. Della goes home, fixes her hair, and prepares for Jim's arrival.

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two -and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

- Thin
- Serious
- Poor
- Only 22
- Burdened
- Needs new overcoat
- Has no gloves

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Della wriggled off the table and went for him. "Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again-you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say 'Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

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“You needn't look for it” said Della. “It's sold, I tell you -sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered,” she went on with sudden serious sweetness, “but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?”

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Literary device	Meaning
Allusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a reference designed to call something to mind • a comical, or humorous, reference to something in society
Simile	a comparison or metaphor that uses like or as
Imagery	visual symbolism
Metaphor	symbolic; the opposite of literal
Figurative language	non-literal language that helps readers to visualize what is being said
Sensory detail	language that appeals to your senses to help you to understand what is happening better
Direct address	the author talks directly to the reader

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"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

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- Jim comes home and is shocked to discover that Della has cut her hair.
- Della is worried that Jim will be upset, but in the end, he still loves her.
- Jim brings home a gift for Della.

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Independent practice

Based on the plot and character development, what do you think will happen next In O.Henry's short story, "The Gift of the Magi"?

Write a narrative in which you create a possible ending for the story. Be sure to use the literary devices that O. Henry uses and keep in mind what you already know about the characters.